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Introduction

For Americans living overseas, the most serious obstacle to personal safety is an attitude of complacency or fatalism. "It can't happen to me" and "if it's going to happen, it's going to happen" is dangerous thinking.

Recent political events throughout the world have changed—but not necessarily diminished—the threats you face.   Today, the most prevalent threat you face overseas is crime.

A criminal attack against you or your family can take place at any post, as can a fire or other disaster. However, you can influence what happens to you by assuming more responsibility for your own security.

The information presented in this booklet is general. Not all the information applies to all posts. Ask for post-specific information from your Regional Security Officer (RSO) or Post Security Officer (PSO).

Residential Security

Residential security is a critical component of any personal security program. The following guidelines should be used in reviewing your residential security.

- ❑ All entrances, including service doors and gates, should have quality locks—preferably deadbolt. Check your:
  - Front Door
  - Rear Door
  - Garage Door(s)
  - Service Door(s)
  - Patio Door
  - Sliding Glass Door
  - Gate
  - Swimming Pool Gate
  - Guest House Door(s)
- ❑ Don't leave keys "hidden" outside the home. Leave an extra key with a trusted neighbor or colleague.
- ❑ Keep doors locked even when you or family members are at home.
- ❑ Have window locks installed on all windows. Use them.
- ❑ Lock louvered windows—especially on the ground floor.
- ❑ Have locks installed on your fuse boxes and external power sources.
- ❑ If you have window grilles and bars, review fire safety. Don't block bedroom

windows with permanent grilles if the windows may be used for emergency egress.

- ❑ If you have burglar or intrusion alarms, check and **use them.**
- ❑ Keep at least one fire extinguisher on each floor, and be sure to keep one in the kitchen. Show family members and household help how to use them.
- ❑ Periodically check smoke detectors and replace batteries when necessary.
- ❑ Keep flashlights in several areas in the house. Check the batteries often, especially if you have children in your home. (They love to play with flashlights!)
- ❑ A family dog can be a deterrent to criminals. But remember, even the best watchdog can be controlled by food or poison. Do not install separate “doggy doors” or entrances. They also can admit small intruders.
- ❑ Choose a location that offers the most security. The less remote, the safer your home will be, particularly in a neighborhood close to police and fire protection.
- ❑ Know your neighbors. Develop a rapport with them and offer to keep an eye on each other’s homes, especially during trips.

- ❑ If you observe any unusual activity, report it immediately to your RSO.
- ❑ Establish safe family living patterns. If you understand the importance of your contribution to the family's overall security, the entire household will be safer.
- ❑ While at home, you and your family should rehearse safety drills and be aware of procedures to escape danger and get help.
- ❑ Educate family members and domestic help in the proper way to answer the telephone at home.
- ❑ Vary daily routines; avoid predictable patterns.
- ❑ Know where all family members are at all times.
- ❑ Use these same guidelines while on leave or in travel status.

Establishing a Safehaven

Follow three basic steps in setting up a safehaven in your home:

- ❑ Designate an internal room;
- ❑ Install a two-way communications system or telephone; and
- ❑ Furnish the safehaven with an emergency kit.

It is highly unlikely you would spend more than a few hours in a safehaven; however, the supplies listed below are suggested for your maximum safety. Your security officer can tell you more about how to select and secure your safehaven.

The following is a checklist of possible safehaven supplies.

Fire extinguisher
Fresh water
5-day supply of food
Candles, matches, flashlight
Extra batteries
Bedding
Toilet facilities
Sterno stove, fuel
Shortwave or other radio
Medical/first aid kit
Other items for your comfort and leisure—a change of clothing, books, games

Home Security While You Are Away

- ❑ Notify your RSO or PSO of your departure and return dates but don’t otherwise publicize your travel or vacation plans. Leave contact numbers with appropriate mission personnel.
- ❑ Arrange to have a friend or colleague pick up your newspapers, mail, or other deliveries daily.

- ❑ Secure your home. Close and lock all windows and doors. Don't forget to lock garage or gate doors.
- ❑ Consider purchasing timers to turn on outside and inside lights automatically at various times throughout the night.
- ❑ Check outside lighting and replace older light bulbs. You don't want a light burning out while you are away.
- ❑ Ask a friend or colleague to check your residence periodically, ensuring your furnace or air conditioning is functioning and that timers and lights are working.
- ❑ The decision to set the automated alarm system may vary from region to region. Power outages and brownouts may trip alarm systems. Check with your security officer for advice on setting alarm systems when you are away for long periods of time.
- ❑ Unplug all unnecessary appliances such as televisions, stereos, and personal computers.
- ❑ Mow your lawn just before leaving; make arrangements to have someone mow it again if you will be gone for an extended period of time. Also arrange for watering, if that is likely to be needed.
- ❑ In the winter, make arrangements to have someone shovel walkways if it snows. At

a minimum, have a neighbor walk from the street to your door several times.

- ❑ If possible, ask a neighbor to park a car in your driveway (if you are taking yours).
- ❑ If you use a telephone answering machine, turn off the ringer on the telephone. If you don’t have an answering machine, unplug or turn off ringers on all telephones.
- ❑ Lock all jewelry, important papers, currency, and other valuable portables in a safe place such as a safe deposit box or home safe.
- ❑ Ensure all personal and home insurance policies are up-to-date and that your coverage is adequate.

Personal Security While Traveling

- ❑ Notify your RSO or PSO of your departure and return dates, but don't otherwise publicize your travel or vacation plans. Leave contact numbers with appropriate mission personnel.
- ❑ Check plane, train, and bus times before you travel.
- ❑ Sit near other people or near aisles or doors. Learn the location of emergency alarms and exits.
- ❑ Stay awake and alert when using public transportation.
- ❑ Consider purchasing special clothing or accessories to hide your passport, money, or credit cards. Keep the majority of your funds in travelers checks and hidden; carry some in your wallet or handbag. Use a money clip. If you are robbed, you may lose the money in the clip but will retain important credit cards and documents.
- ❑ Keep valuables out of sight and luggage close at hand. If carrying a handbag, keep it in front of you, closed, with the fastening toward your body. Keep a wallet in your front pants pocket.
- ❑ Let go if your bag is snatched.

- ❑ Do some research on the area you are visiting. Talk to your security officer or consular colleagues regarding travel advisories or warnings.
- ❑ When traveling, dress casually; dress down where appropriate. Be aware of local customs.
- ❑ Don’t wear excess jewelry. Reduce wallet and purse contents, particularly cards denoting affiliations, memberships, accounts, etc.
- ❑ At airports, proceed through security checks and go to the boarding area as quickly as possible. These areas are usually the most secure in the airport.
- ❑ In any crowded situation, be aware of any crowding or jostling, even if it appears innocent. This is often a ploy by pickpockets to distract you.
- ❑ Be very careful any time you use a telephone calling card. Fraudulent uses of these cards are on the rise. Look for people observing your card or your fingers as you dial your code. Avoid being heard giving the number to local telephone operators.

Personal Security in Hotels

- ❑ Do not discuss your business or travel plans in public areas where they may be overheard. Discuss your travel plans and movements during your stay with as few people as possible.
- ❑ Selecting a hotel room on the third to fifth floor generally will keep you out of reach of criminal activity from the street but still within reach of most fire truck ladders.
- ❑ Do not entertain strangers in your hotel room.
- ❑ Be alert to overly friendly locals who may have criminal intentions. They may offer to take you to a “special” restaurant. Their ruse may be to offer drugged re-freshments.
- ❑ Never leave valuables in your hotel room exposed or unattended, even in a locked suitcase.
- ❑ Place valuables—money, jewelry, airplane tickets, credit cards, passport—in a hotel safe deposit box or room safe.
- ❑ Familiarize yourself with escape routes in case of fire or other catastrophe.
- ❑ Use the door chain or bolt lock whenever you are in your room.
- ❑ Use the door viewer (peephole) before opening the door to visitors.

- ❑ Do not discuss your room number while standing in the lobby or leave your room key on restaurant or bar tables.
- ❑ Keep your room neat so you will notice disturbed or missing items quickly.

Fire Safety at Home

Statistics about fire are frightening. In America, about 30,000 people are injured and nearly 4,800 die from fire each year. This rate is lower than in most other countries. Differences in fire codes, building and electrical standards, and even firefighting capabilities can increase your threat from fire if you live overseas.

Three vital facts you should know about fire:

- ❑ It isn't usually fire that kills, it is the products of combustion—smoke, toxic gases, or superheated air.
- ❑ Fire travels at lightning speed—up to 19 feet per second.
- ❑ The critical hours for a house fire are 11 PM to 6 AM when most people are asleep.

This means you need to detect fire early, and you must move quickly when you do. You and your family can avoid becoming a statistic if you:

- ❑ Install smoke detectors in your home.
- ❑ Create and practice a fire escape plan.
- ❑ Take fire preventive measures such as those listed on the next page.

Smoke Detectors

A smoke detector can mean the difference between life and death. They are inexpensive and are battery operated; they are not at the

mercy of sporadic electrical service. You should have one on every level of your home, particularly in the hallway outside bedrooms. Test your detectors regularly, and replace the batteries as needed—usually twice a year.

Exit Drills

You and your family should create a fire exit plan together. Learn how to escape the house from every room. Locate two exits from each bedroom. Designate a meeting place outside the house. Most importantly—especially if you have children—PRACTICE YOUR PLAN!

Preventive Measures

Carelessness with cigarettes is the most frequent cause of house fires. Never smoke in bed!

Open flames and the resulting sparks are dangerous. Don't place barbecue grills or other open flames on the balcony or near the house.

Check for: faulty electrical wiring; overloaded circuits; faulty equipment, including cooking and heating appliances; leaking propane tanks; overloaded or frayed extension cords; dirty chimneys and vents; and flammable liquids.

Keep a fire extinguisher in the house, preferably one on every level but particularly in the kitchen. Teach older children and household help how to use the extinguisher.

Security Do's for Children

- ❑ Teach children never to admit strangers into the home.
- ❑ Teach children local emergency phone numbers, the mission number, and how to use the two-way radio. Make sure younger children know their name, address, and phone number.
- ❑ Caution teenagers about "blind dates" or meeting anyone they do not know.
- ❑ Teach younger members of your family not to open mail or packages.
- ❑ Teach young children how to answer the telephone so that they do not give out personal information, such as home address, absence of adults, etc.
- ❑ Teach children how to say no to strangers.
- ❑ Teach children how to exit the house in case of emergency.

Letter and Parcel Bombs

Letter and parcel bombs generally are “victim activated” meaning that a victim or intended target must activate the device by opening it. They do not normally contain timing devices.

Bombs can range from the size of a cigarette package to a large parcel. Letter and package bombs have been disguised as letters, books, candy, and figurines. Delivery methods have included mail systems, personal delivery, or placement at the recipient’s site.

A letter or parcel bomb might have some of the following indicators:

- ❑ Suspicious origin—especially if the postmark or name of sender is unusual, unknown, or no further address is given.
- ❑ Excessive or inadequate postage.
- ❑ Off-balance or lopsided letter or package.
- ❑ Unusual weight for the size of the letter or package. Letters also may be unusually thick.
- ❑ Stiffness or springiness of contents. (When checking, do not bend excessively.)
- ❑ Protruding wires or components; unusual grease or oil stains on the envelope.
- ❑ Strange smell, particularly almond or other suspicious odors.

- ❑ Handwriting of sender is not familiar or indicates a foreign style not normally received by recipient.
- ❑ Common words or names are misspelled.
- ❑ Rub on or block lettering.
- ❑ Restrictive markings such as “confidential” or “personal” or an honorific title appended to the name of the addressee.
- ❑ Small hole in the envelope or package wrapping that could be a provision for an arming/safety wire.
- ❑ Rattling inside the envelope or package—possibly loose components of a device.
- ❑ Visual distractions (i.e., currency, pornography).

If you identify a letter or package as suspicious, don’t let anyone near it. Notify your RSO or PSO immediately, and leave the letter or package in an open area, such as a courtyard, where it is easily accessible to bomb squad personnel. Never submerge it in water.

Carjacking

- ❑ When in your car, always keep the doors locked. Any time you drive through areas containing stoplights, stop signs, or anything that significantly reduces vehicular speed, keep your windows up.
- ❑ Leave ample maneuvering space between your vehicle and the one in front of you. If you are approached by suspicious persons while you are stopped, do not roll down windows; drive away quickly.
- ❑ If you are being followed or harassed by another driver, try to find the nearest police station, hotel, or other public facility. Once you find a place of safety, don't worry about using a legal parking space. Park as close as you can, and get inside fast.
- ❑ If another driver tries to force you to pull over or to cut you off, keep driving and try to get away. Try to note the license plate number of the car and a description of the car and driver. If this effort places you in danger, don't do it. The information is not as important as your safety.
- ❑ If you are being followed, never lead the person back to your home or stop and get out. Drive to the nearest police station, public facility, or U.S. mission. (You could verify surveillance by going completely around an arbitrarily chosen block.) Always report these incidents to the RSO or PSO.

- ❑ If you are traveling alone and a car "bumps" into you, don't stop to exchange accident information. Go to the nearest service station or other public place to call the police. (Check with your RSO or PSO to see if this advice is appropriate for your post.)
- ❑ Never, ever pick up hitchhikers!
- ❑ When you park, look for a spot that offers good lighting and is close to a location where there are a lot of people. Lock valuables in the trunk, and lock all doors.
- ❑ Extra precautions are necessary when shopping. If you take packages out to lock them in your trunk, then plan to return to the stores to do more shopping, it may be a good idea to move your car to another section of the parking lot or street. The criminal knows that you will be coming back and can wait to ambush you. By moving your car, you give the impression you're leaving. If you think you are being followed, do not go back to your car. Return to the safety of the occupied shopping area or office building and contact the authorities.
- ❑ If you have car trouble on the road, raise your hood. If you have a radio antenna, place a handkerchief or other flag there.

When people stop to help, don't get out of the car unless you know them or it's the police. Ask the "good samaritan" to stop at the nearest service station and report your problem.

- ❑ If you are in a parking lot or parked on the street and have trouble, be wary of personal assistance from strangers. Go to the nearest telephone and call a repair service or friend for assistance. If you feel threatened by the presence of nearby strangers, lock yourself in your car and blow the horn to attract attention of others.

By using these basic safety tips and your own common sense, you can help protect yourself.

Surveillance

The purpose of surveillance is to identify a potential target based on the security precautions that individual takes, and the most suitable time, location, and method of attack. Surveillance may last for days or weeks. Naturally, the surveillance of a person who has set routines and who takes few precautions will take less time.

Detecting surveillance requires a fairly constant state of alertness and, therefore, must become a habit. A good sense of what is normal and what is unusual in your surroundings could be more important than any other type of security precaution you may take. Above all, do not hesitate to report any unusual event.

There are three forms of surveillance: foot, vehicular, and stationary. People who have well-established routines permit surveillants to use methods that are much more difficult to detect.
If, for example, you leave the office at the same time each day and travel by the most direct route to your home or if you live in a remote area with few or no alternate routes to your home, surveillants have no need to follow you all the way to your residence.

You should:

- ❑ Vary your routes and times of travel.
- ❑ Be familiar with your route and have alternate routes.
- ❑ Check regularly for surveillance.

Stationary surveillance is most commonly used by terrorist organizations. Most attacks take place near the victim’s residence, because that part of the route is least easily varied. People are generally most vulnerable in the morning when departing for work because these times are more predictable than evening arrivals.

Many surveillance teams use vans with wlndows in the sides or back that permit observation from the interior of the van. Often the van wlll have the name of a business or utility company to provide some pretext for being in the area.

Where it is not possible to watch the residence unobserved, surveillants must come up with a plausible reason for being in the area. Women and children are often used to give an appearance of innocence. Try to check the street in front of your home from a window before you go out each day.

If you suspect that you are being followed, drive to the nearest police station, fire station, or the U.S. mission. Note the license numbers, color and make of the vehicle, and any information printed on its sides that may be useful in tracing the vehicle or its occupants.

Don’t wait to verify surveillance before you report it.

Be alert to people disguised as public utility crews, road workers, vendors, etc., who might station themselves near your home or office.

Whenever possible, leave your car in a secured parking area. Be especially alert in underground parking areas.

Always check your vehicle inside and out before entering it. If you notice anything unusual, do not enter the vehicle.

Household staff and family members should be reminded to look for suspicious activities around your residence; for example, surveillance, attempts to gain access to your residence by fraudulent means, and telephone calls or other inquiries requesting personal information.

Tell your household staff and family members to note descriptions and license numbers of suspicious vehicles. Advise them to be alert for details. Household staff can be one of the most effective defensive mechanisms in your home—use them to your advantage.

While there are no guarantees that these precautions, even if diligently adhered to, will protect you from terrorist violence, they can reduce your vulnerability and, therefore, your chances of becoming a victim.

Sexual Assault Prevention

- ❑ Be alert. Don't assume that you are always safe. Think about your safety everywhere. Your best protection is avoiding dangerous situations.
- ❑ Trust your instincts. If you feel uncomfortable in any situation, leave.
- ❑ Always walk, drive, and park your car in well-lit areas.
- ❑ Walk confidently at a steady pace on the side of the street facing traffic.
- ❑ Walk close to the curb. Avoid doorways, bushes, and alleys.
- ❑ Wear clothes and shoes that allow freedom of movement.
- ❑ Walk to your car with keys in your hand.
- ❑ If you have car trouble, raise the hood and stay inside your car. If a stranger wants to help, have him or her call for help. Don't leave your car.
- ❑ Keep your car doors locked and never pick up hitchhikers.
- ❑ Make sure all windows and doors in your home are locked, especially if you are home alone.
- ❑ Never give the impression that you are home alone if strangers telephone or come to the door.

- ❑ If a stranger asks to use your phone, have him wait outside while you make the call.
- ❑ If you come home and find a door or window open or signs of forced entry, don’t go in. Go to the nearest phone and call Post 1 or the local law enforcement authorities.